A.I.N.A.

Archeological Reconnaissance in the Gladstone Pass Region, Southwest Yukon

for

Arctic, the Journal of the
Arctic Institute of North America
3458 Redpath Street, Montreal 109, Que.

Submitted by
Michael Gates
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta

Archeological Reconnaissance in the Gladstone Pass Region, Southwest Yukon

The following is a brief summary of archeological reconnaissance in the Gladstone Pass region, Southwest Yukon, as compiled from field notes, maps, photos, and personal observations. Under grants from the Arctic Institute of North America, field work was conducted in 1969 and 1971. The author was present during the latter field season.

The Gladstone Pass is located at approximately 61°21'N, and 137°30'W, running in a southwesterly to northeasterly direction between Kluane Lake and Aishihik-Sekulmun Lakes (fig. 1). The height of the pass, although slightly less than 4000 feet above sea level, is virtually treeless in its higher portions. The Gladstone Lakes, at the height of the summit, were seen to be partially ice-bound till nearly mid June, 1971. Animal species here included grizzly bear, moose, caribou, Dall sheep, ground squirrel and ptarmigan.

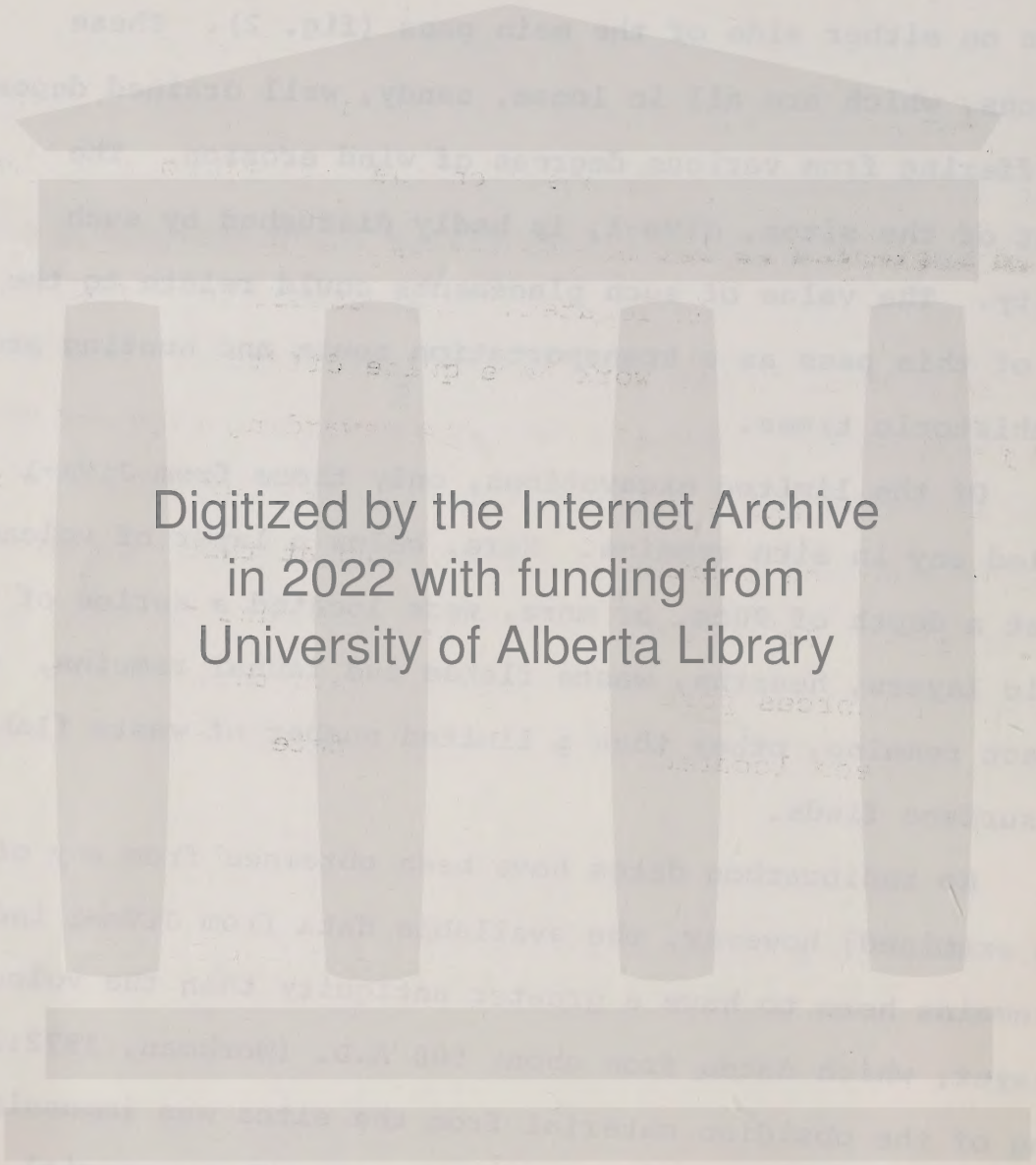
In total, from the two short field seasons in this vicinity, seven archeological sites were located, six of which were surface collected. Three of these sites were subsequently submitted to limited test excavations. In total, these sites have yielded nearly one hundred artifacts and several hundred waste flakes to date.

The sites occupy two general locations in the pass, either in the main broad U-shaped valley between adjacent lakes, or on terraces overlooking streams which drain the upland regions on either side of the main pass (fig. 2). These locations, which are all in loose, sandy, well drained deposits, are suffering from various degrees of wind erosion. The richest of the sites, JiVm-1, is badly disturbed by such activity. The value of such placements could relate to the value of this pass as a transportation route and hunting area in prehistoric times.

Of the limited excavations, only those from JiVm-1 revealed any in situ remains. Here, below a layer of volcanic ash, at a depth of 90cm. or more, were located a series of organic layers, hearths, waste flakes and faunal remains. All artifact remains, other than a limited number of waste flakes were surface finds.

No radiocarbon dates have been obtained from any of the sites examined; however, the available data from JiVm-1 indicate the remains here to have a greater antiquity than the volcanic ash layer, which dates from about 500 A.D. (Workman, 1972:2). Dating of the obsidian material from the sites was impossible due to wind ablation of the long exposed surface material.

Culturally, two of the sites, JiVm-1 & 2, contain microblades and cores. The total assemblages would seem to fall within the Northwest Microblade Tradition (MacNeish, 1964: 345, 346), as defined by the sequence Little Arm through Taye



Lake Phases in the same region. The most notable affinities appear to be with the Tuktu Complex as defined by Campbell for the Anuktuvuk Pass region in the central Brooks Range of Alaska (Campbell, 1961).

Future prospects of an archeological nature for this region are extremely good; based on the limited work conducted, only an estimated 20-30% of the easily identifiable archeological sites have been located. Inaccessability of this region will make future work here quite difficult, but excavation within the pass will be quite rewarding provided that sufficient crew and equipment can facilitate extensive excavation during the extremely short season at this elevation and latitude. It should be further noted that natural, rather than human forces pose the most immediate threat to the sites which have been located to the present date.

Michael Gates,

University of Alberta

Edmonton, Alberta

REFERENCES

Campbell, John M. 1961. The Tuktu Complex of Anuktuvuk Pass. Anthropological Papers of the University of Alaska Vol. 9, Number 2, pp. 61-81.

MacNeish, Richard S. 1964. Investigations in Southwest Yukon. Papers of the Robert S. Peabody Foundation for Archeology Volume 6, Number 2. Andover, Massachusetts.

Workman, William B. The Cultural Significance of the Volcanic Ash Which Fell in the Upper Yukon Basin About 1400 Years Ago. Paper presented at the International Conference on the Prehistory and Paleoecology of the Western Arctic and Subarctic, Calgary. 1972.